



# the spectator

VOLUME VI ISSUE I

THE MADEIRA SCHOOL

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## Republicans Fight to Keep Majority *Key Senate Races to Watch in the Coming Election*

Lilly Tanenbaum '21  
Staff Writer

While the most talked about aspect of this election season is undoubtedly the presidential election, Senate elections also have incredible power to sway the direction of the country. There are 23 Republican and 12 Democratic senators up for reelection this November, with some facing serious challenges and others remaining secure in their seats. Republicans, defending 11 more seats than Democrats, will have to fight to maintain their slim majority. Republicans currently have 53 seats to Democrats' 45, with two independent senators consistently voting with the Democrats. Whether or not President Trump remains in office for a second term, losing its Senate majority could create a number of obstacles for the Republican Party. Should Democrats maintain control in the House of Representatives and take control of the Senate, President Trump would have difficulty passing legislation or confirming appointees if elected for a second term. If Democratic nominee Joe Biden wins the election and Democrats gain control in the Senate and maintain control in the House, they would then control two of the three branches of government. No matter the outcome of the 2020 election, the Senate will be a key factor in the direction of the country in the coming years.

While around half of the 23 Republican seats up for reelection are considered secure, many others appear to be more exposed. In Arizona, Sen. Martha McSally (R) is fighting to defend her seat against former astronaut Mark Kelly. If elected, Kelly would be the second Democratic senator from the state of Arizona in decades, joining the first, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D), who defeated McSally in 2018. Kelly polled ahead of McSally by an average of 9.8 points in September, according to Real Clear Politics, indicating that McSally may lose her seat in the Senate.

Sen. Susan Collins (R) is also fighting to maintain her seat, which she has held for twenty years. Democrats have criticized

*"Whether or not President Trump remains in office for a second term, losing its Senate majority could create a number of obstacles for the Republican Party."*

Collins over high-profile votes she made in President Trump's favor, including her votes to approve Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh and acquit President Trump following his impeachment by the House. Collins has a tendency to withhold her own controversial opinions from the public; in a debate against her opponent, Maine Speaker of



Sen. Joni Ernst addressing the Conservative Political Action Conference; Ernst is hoping to defend her Iowa seat in the coming election. Photo courtesy of Gage Skidmore on Wikimedia Commons.

the House Sara Gideon, Collins refused to disclose whether she would vote for Trump or Biden, saving herself from losing any voters who would be offended by either answer. Gideon polled ahead of Collins by only 1 point in a FiveThirtyEight poll released on September 10th.

Presidential polling and predictions have become intertwined with possible outcomes for Senate seats in certain key states. In North Carolina, Sen. Thom Tillis (R), is fighting to maintain his seat. Tillis' opponent, war veteran and former State Senator Cal Cunningham, polled ahead of Tillis by an average of 3.4 points on September

6th, according to Real Clear Politics. Tillis will likely benefit from the Trump campaign's efforts to motivate Republican voters in the state. North Carolina is not the only state where the presidential election has come into play in senatorial elections this year; Sen. Joni Ernst (R) of Iowa is defending her seat in a state that is suddenly, and surprisingly, a swing state in the presidential election. Although Ernst's competitor, Theresa Greenfield, trailed Ernst by 5 points in a FiveThirtyEight poll done in August, Trump is not polling as well as he was in 2016, indicating challenges for the Republican Party. Trump, who won by 10 points in Iowa in 2016, led

Biden by 1.6 points in a FiveThirtyEight poll in September.

The Senate has incredible deciding power regarding any action taken by the federal government. Senators are given longer terms and more power relative to their counterparts in the House. As the nation's future appears unpredictable in the face of a controversial presidential election, there are many Senate seats that will have lasting effects on the nation no matter which party they end up going to in November. The Senate will continue to play a key role in the increasingly partisan politics of this country, and both parties have a chance at holding the majority after this election.

## An Overview of Madeira's Changes *Madeira's inclusion initiatives for students of color*

Safiyah Bennett '22  
Staff Writer

Following the recent racial unrest throughout both the country and the Madeira community, a new plan has been put in place to ensure that every student feels safe and advocated for, regardless of skin color. On September 1st, the community's new head of school, Gretchen Warner, listed a set of actions for the 2020-2021 school year to ensure equitable treatment for all Madeira students. The plans that will be implemented are as follows.

Ms. Warner proposed increased involvement from the Board of Trustees Diversity Committee to work with student leaders and foster a community of inclusion and equity amongst all students, and to "bring an antirac-



Madeira has begun making positive, diversity conscious changes during the coronavirus pandemic. Photo courtesy of AP Images.

ist lens" to issues that might otherwise negatively affect students of color. She also plans to have school faculty and administrators take a deeper look at implicit bias in Madeira's disciplinary system and curriculum, with the help of student feedback. The Head of School also cites "Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain"

by Zaretta Hammond as a guide for the changes being made at Madeira. This book specializes in finding and relaying ways to overcome the struggles educators face when teaching students of different ethnicities and linguistic backgrounds. There is also a plan to hold more on-campus workshops where students and faculty

can educate themselves on topics negatively affecting students of color, such as microaggressions and implicit bias. Ms. Warner states "Equity and inclusion initiatives have no end point; these are ongoing commitments. Similarly, courageous conversations and practicing civil discourse have never been more important," signifying a positive shift in classroom environment at Madeira.

This proposal for the school year ahead seeks to remediate many racial biases and injustices that current and previous Madeira students have reported, both directly and indirectly, in large part through the 'Black at Madeira' Instagram page. It is a hopeful plan that aims to bridge the gap between students of color and their white teachers and peers. It tackles these issues with

education and awareness, instead of turning a blind or accusatory eye to the many students calling for racial justice and reform. Madeira's new approach and initiative seeks to better educate all students of color and has the potential to live up to the Madeira motto. The school has yet to see these changes implemented in

*"This proposal for the school year ahead seeks to remediate many racial biases and injustices that current and previous Madeira students have reported."*

daily life, however progress is a hopeful prospect as Madeira makes moves to accommodate in-person learning.



What are our assumptions?

Coming to the U.S. as a non-heterosexual Buddhist from China, where we have gun bans and reproductive freedom, I was unquestionably attracted to American liberalism, which supported my identity and views. The proclaimed embracement of diversity, especially the willingness to listen to dissimilar ideas, sounded wonderful.

However, I often discover unconscious exclusion. A white supremacist and an advocate for limiting abortions may both be excluded in a left-wing environment, even though one discriminates while the other may simply be supporting her religious community. I find myself making assumptions too: when hearing the word “conservative,” I immediately think of racism and become fearfully alert, even though many conservatives can be, say, economically conservative, and simply believe in the principle of having small governmental presence in the economy.

When I interned in U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro’s (D-CT) D.C. office, many constituents called

in to condemn minorities’ rights and DeLauro’s opposition to Trump’s trade war against China. I thought: how uninformed or spiteful they must be to assume that protection makes minorities privileged and that all Chinese are maliciously plotting against them. But soon I realized, was not I also assuming?

I simply stamped on them the label of “unsavable: too conservative” to avoid the need of understanding their arguments. I dehumanized them, reduced them to mere labels of their beliefs, and convinced myself that they are not worth the trouble to listen to.

While I cannot agree with a caller who claims the Chinese are stealing jobs from the Americans, there is something that people with different opinions all share: we all make assumptions.

And then we refuse to listen, because we think we know all there is to know – we project the knowledge we have about a few individuals of a group onto the whole. Although we could understand that each individual is different, we are too lazy to jump outside the box of stereotypes we established. So, though we might not be able to stop ourselves from assuming, we can recognize that we assume too.

By recognizing that we make the same mistakes as people we disagree with, we may be more tolerant and willing to investigate where assumptions about us

came from. We might more easily feel empathy for others on the basis of our common flaw. From there, we can attempt to listen to each other and acquaint ourselves with the rationales for seemingly rude opinions, so that those with different views are not just faceless, spiteful “Chinese people” or “Trump supporters,” but instead people with ideas that we can understand even if we cannot agree with them. We need much understanding in our societies today. So maybe it can start now, with us.

Isabella Han



Print media has long been a source where people seek to learn about uncomfortable truths in the world. Those who journey to nations outside their home country for the sake of revealing what is going on behind-the-scenes in a particular regime or state demonstrate incredible courage. Their work is integral to the preservation of democratic ideals and our collective humanity, which we lose when we look away from the hardships others face. Recently, though, many have elected to refrain from reading newspapers and other news sources, often on account of personal discomfort with the material presented by such outlets.

When we look away from what is experienced by others for the sake of preserving our own comfort, we reveal that we care more deeply for the maintenance of our own quality of life than for the lives of our fellow human beings. Certainly, it is easier to abstain from reading and viewing stories that lead us to reckon

with the immorality of our global institutions than it is to actively address the radical inequalities they create. But this is no defense for inattentiveness or inaction. We have an obligation to seek equitable treatment and conditions for our fellow people because we are all the same, no true divisions exist between people, and all are connected to one another.

This obligation is above all a human one, it stems from no religious ideology or social contract. It necessitates that we, at the very least, look at and understand the challenges that others face within and outside of the nations we identify with, and it obliges us to actively seek ways to lessen the harms done to others by ourselves and our global institutions. In this goal, it is necessary that we seek the truth in ourselves and in global events, so that we might use this understanding of our shortcomings, ignorance, and the harms we inflict to create institutions that better serve the needs of the global populace.

All this cannot occur unless we, as a society and as human beings, seek the truth. We must seek truths of how injustice plagues our world in all forms, and how unjust systems--such as neo-colonialism and radical economic inequality--harm all those who inhabit this planet. We must seek the truth regardless of whether it is uncomfortable to view, because to turn our backs on it would be to turn our backs on those who suffer from those truths and to disregard our common humanity.

Rachael van der Linden



## Cancel Culture: An Examination

*How does cancel culture take away teenagers’ ability to grow?*

Brooke Slingluff ‘23  
Staff Writer

In this age filled with technology and an ever-changing media, the long-term effects of cancel culture on teenagers are still largely unknown. As teenagers, it is important to remember that technology is still being improved constantly. Many aspects of media and technology are still under review as life finds different flaws in the system. One such flaw is the relatively recent idea of cancel culture, which is the process of immediately retracting support for an individual upon discovering that they have committed a harmful or insensitive act. Though its intentions are good, it can often lead people to form judgments of others without taking the time to learn the context of the action or give the individual an opportunity to learn and grow from their mistake. Having this stress that if a mistake is made, it can affect one’s image forever, is a difficult concept. As such, society needs to create a space where mistakes are welcome, and instead of canceling people for their mistakes, opportunities should be made for people to learn.

Since making mistakes is so important for personal growth, as a society we need to cancel

“cancel culture.” While growing up, mistakes are essential in figuring out what is right and what is wrong. For teenagers especially, mistakes are normal and are beneficial in figuring out the correct way to do something. Mistakes also help the development of healthy coping methods for when things go wrong. The stigma that cancel culture has created throughout social media is an issue because it creates an environment where teenagers feel that if they do one thing wrong, it can impact their life forever. Though mistakes can be bad and do need

*“As digital citizens, it is vital to remember that everyone is human and making mistakes should be normalized. This is by no means an excuse for people to treat others poorly or endanger others.”*

to be recognized as harmful, the method of delivery of accountability to an individual could be improved.

Though cancel culture is meant to hold people accountable for their actions, which is a pursuit with good intentions, there are better ways to teach a lesson.



A person hiding behind social media. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

As digital citizens, it is vital to remember that everyone is human and making mistakes should be normalized. This is by no means an excuse for people to treat others poorly or endanger others. But, by holding people accountable with the intention of teaching them what they did wrong, modern media can become a place where mistakes are a part of life. Teaching people the error of the things they do helps these mistakes not be repeated, instead of leaving them in a shameful place where the same things can happen again. Oftentimes, the whole story is not known, so recognizing that everyone is still learning is the most beneficial thing that can be done to help media become a friendlier and more constructive place.

Cancel culture, though well-intentioned, is extremely

harmful because it does not help people learn to not repeat their mistakes. As the problem of not effectively dealing with harmful actions is only getting worse, it is important to work with others and establish a middle ground when handling a situation. Education instead of dismissal will teach people to make better decisions in the future. This gives them a chance to make things right and truly grow from their mistakes, rather than being publicly disliked for a period and eventually not held accountable (as is currently the case). Lastly, by creating a culture of acknowledging that nobody is perfect and that everyone is able to grow, cancel culture can be left behind. Mistakes may be once again accepted as a part of life and individuals can be effectively held accountable for harmful actions.

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At *The Spectator*, we encourage any member of The Madeira School to submit to the newspaper. Articles submitted are subjected to a staff peer review and edit, then submitted for editorial review. Submission does not guarantee print, but it does help! Of particular interest to the staff are articles concerning the Madeira community, club news and events, and sports. Submissions should be sent to the editors or the advisor, Ms. Zahradnik at [thespectator@madeira.org](mailto:thespectator@madeira.org).

#### Corrections

Any corrections should be sent to *The Spectator’s* lead advisor, Ms. Zahradnik, at [thespectator@madeira.org](mailto:thespectator@madeira.org). The publication seeks to always publish corrections as they come to our attention.

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# LOTTERY, INHERITED WEALTH, DEBT

## THE RICH'S MORAL OBLIGATION TO THE POOR

Isabella Han '21  
Columnist

Do the rich owe anything to the poor? Some argue that the rich do not, so long as they have earned their money legally. Indeed, other than a few measures imposed by the government (e.g. taxes), no one is forced to give out their income for redistribution in western societies. The world also did not fall apart after years of the wealthy's reluctance to give out more than a dime of their income to those in need. But morally, non-destitute individuals have an obligation to take action, whether monetary or otherwise, to better the situation of the less fortunate.

Inequalities created by mere chance should be alleviated through the fortunate aiding the financially less well-off. There have been suggestions of the idea of a "survival lottery," in which every individual would have an equal chance to survive or die in a world that would lack the resources for everyone's subsistence. While that idea may sound horrific, a similar lottery is in place in our world today: a birth lottery.

Being born into a rich family, city, or even country means individuals are automatically entitled to rights and resources that peers in poorer families and societies lack. Different from the survival lottery's scenar-

io, however, there are enough resources for everyone's subsistence in this world. But these resources are disproportionately held in the hands of the privileged few, who can squander their resources on luxury goods despite the vast impact their money could have on lessening the suffering caused by others' lack of basic goods.

This state of distribution is not fair. Suppose that everyone, as the philosopher John Rawls suggested, enters a social agreement without knowing where on the social ladder they stand. The current wealth distribution would not be agreed upon since no one can guarantee that they would not be underprivileged. A reasonable distribution would likely entail some protection of the poor. In reality, achieving this protection can be difficult; those who are born privileged are raised and taught to evaluate their actions with knowledge of their status. Conscious that they will likely never have to experience poverty, the rich become more inclined to protect their affluent lifestyle above all else.

However, one's luck in being born into a rich family does not change the undeserved nature of the rich's privilege. While their parents may have earned their fortunes, individuals born into rich families would gain an unfair advantage that they did not earn – they did not labor any

more than a child born into a destitute family, so some redistribution of resources among children is fair. But inequality could hardly be totally eliminated, because parents, who may have put different amounts of effort into the construction of a society, may rely on their children later in life, so their children's access to resources matters to them too.

Aside from considering the elements of chance, the rich of certain regions must keep in mind the historical debt they owe to the poor. For example, individuals in states that participated in colonialism have a debt to their counterparts in the once colonized countries. Enjoying material affluence that was achieved through the exploitation of other people renders one indebted to those who were stepped on for his leisurely life. More importantly, this debt does not disappear with the passage of time. As Thomas Pogge suggests, even though the rich now are not personally responsible for the atrocities committed in the colonial era, they are reaping the benefits of its legacy.

Redistributing resources until everyone stops owing each other is perhaps the most morally correct way of exchange. However, this is hard to calculate or carry out. As humans are self-interested, the wealthy are likely to be unwilling to give out much of their assets. Institutions

may also be opposed to this idea, as it might compromise a society's efficiency.

Moreover, deciding on how much to take away from or distribute to each individual is difficult. Should the rich and the poor have exactly the same amount of resources after distribution?

Does a person who just got a British passport owe to, say, a destitute Indian, the same amount of resources as one whose family lived in the UK and enjoyed the benefits of colonization for generations? If they owe different amounts, why? And how can one translate this debt into exact numbers of dollars or pounds he should give out?

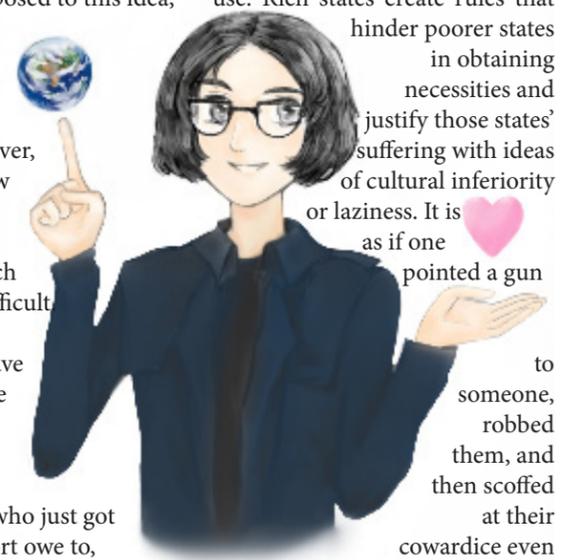
While there might not be a perfect amount for every rich person to give back to the poor, the moral obligation for the former to do something for the latter is clear. Currently, however, the wealthy are exacerbating inequalities. The more economically well-off states impose tariffs and great prices on intellectual property for the poorer ones, but do not pay adequately for the pollution they cause and the resources they

use. Rich states create rules that hinder poorer states in obtaining necessities and justify those states' suffering with ideas of cultural inferiority or laziness. It is as if one

pointed a gun to someone, robbed them, and then scoffed at their cowardice even

though there was no way for the victim to overcome an armed bandit. Some could argue that individuals do not participate in this robbery. This may be true. Though if the state is the bandit, privileged individuals are its family, who get a share of its spoils at the end of the day. These individuals are therefore the benefactors of the crime and owe compensation to the victims because they have enjoyed the crime's spoils.

Whether in the form of donation, increased imports, or impartation of technology, we are morally obligated to assist our less well-off counterparts. Will we walk away with our share of unearned spoils and ignore human suffering to satisfy consumerist whims?



# Ageism in American Democracy

## How the Electoral System Fails Young Voters



Voting age young Minnesotans demonstrate their political interest by attending a climate protest. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Megan Schmitz '21  
Staff Writer

Since the Census Bureau began collecting electoral participation data in the mid-1960s, youth participation has fluctuated between 25-45%, about half that of adults above the age of sixty-five. Despite the consistency of these percentages across decades, explanations for this gap often place the blame onto the current generations of young Americans: the youth are vapid, or apathetic, or entitled, and their interest in politics will develop as they mature. This attribution of a consistent trend entirely to the emo-

tions of individuals, in accepting the political detachment of a third of the electorate as natural and inevitable, is both inaccurate and undemocratic. In reality, systemic shortcomings and a widespread failure to acknowledge inequities bred by electoral procedures combine to make going to the polls a challenge for young citizens.

Despite commonplace claims to the contrary, most young adults do express an interest in politics, eliminating personal apathy as the sole cause of low turnout. When surveyed by researchers from Duke and the University of Virginia, 80% of all respondents between the ages of eighteen and

twenty-four reported an intention to vote in the 2018 election. Moreover, according to the Pew Research Center, 41% of the people who responded that they had attended a racial justice protest this year were under the age of thirty. More generally, several studies, including one published in the Journal of Social Media in Society, have found a strong correlation between age and participation in social activism. The majority of America's youth not voting must then be the consequence of factors beyond general political inattentiveness.

When registering to vote, young people grapple with processes and requirements that vary by state. For first-time voters or out-of-state students, the regionality of registration expectations can beget critical misconceptions; in 2020, 25% of young people questioned by Tufts University pollsters gave the incorrect answer when asked if they could register online. If young people presume that they can register online, they may not investigate how to register until a mailed request would not arrive prior to their state's registration deadline. Once a young American has learned of their state's registration method, they must prove their identity, a process which can require access to documentation as minimal as a social security card or as extensive as a face ID

and birth certificate. According to one 2014 University of Michigan report, only 69% of nineteen-year-olds in the United States have driver's licenses, so a substantial segment of first-time voters do not have access to valid, state-issued identification. Even those with driver's licenses might have

*“When surveyed by researchers from Duke and the University of Virginia, 80% of all respondents between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four reported an intention to vote.”*

to obtain new licensing if they acquired their card in another state. Despite not explicitly targeting young people, these registration qualifications disproportionately disenfranchise college-age Americans and first-time voters.

For young registered Americans, inflexible schedules and poll inaccessibility can impede actually casting a vote. Unlike older working adults, who in thirty states receive mandatory leave on Election Day, most of the 57% of young Americans in college are not granted time off during which to vote by their schools. Outside of educational obligations, one in five students works twenty-to-thirty-hour weeks, lar-

gely for corporations that until recently did not offer voter leave nationally. While companies such as Starbucks and Target will give all employees time off in 2020, they have no lawful obligation to continue to do so after this year. When surveyed by Duke researchers, a third of young people who failed to vote in 2018 cited time as their rationale, so legal assurances that everyone has time to vote could substantially increase youth turnout. Another third of young adults report lacking transportation to polling places, an issue exacerbated by explicit or effective bans on temporary polls on college campuses. For example, Florida state law practically outlaws campus polling locations by requiring polls to have extensive non-permit parking.

Though criticized for their lack of civic participation, youth voters face systemic challenges during the registration and voting processes that hinder them from casting a ballot. In failing to acknowledge this reality, politicians perpetuate its disenfranchising effect. As affirmed by the 26th Amendment, every citizen over the age of eighteen has a right to a voice in the country's governance. So long as the United States continues to excuse low youth participation as inevitable, the government will not function as a true representative democracy.

# Yemen's Ongoing Humanitarian Crisis:

## *What is it, and what is being done to resolve its effects?*

Isabelle Murdock '22  
Staff Writer

Yemen, a country located in the southwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, is currently in the midst of the world's largest humanitarian crisis. 80% of the population, over 24 million people, are in need of some form of assistance according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA). The extreme difficulties the country faces today began to arise years ago and are now stacked on top of each other to create a state of persistent distress for inhabitants of the country.

Yemen has been a war-torn nation since late 2014, when a group known as the Houthis, originating from northern Yemen, took control of the government in the capital city of Sana'a. Since then, war has spread throughout the country. Members of the Yemeni government withdrew from the capital city in early 2015, and shortly after this, a group of allied states led by Saudi Arabia began a campaign to recapture the government. On top of this, southern Yemen has been arguing for withdrawal from the country, wishing to reinstate the previously recognized countries of North and South Yemen which merged in the 1990s. Disagreements between government and non-government forces were responsible for the destruction of public infrastructure and services, making it impossible for

civilians to access basic supplies, and forcing citizens from their homes.

Coupled with these years of constant conflict, there has also been an influx in disease, an economic collapse, and a growing famine. The UN has stated that, according to their numbers, over 200,000 people have been killed because of these events, and roughly four million have been displaced from their homes in search of aid. While external forces are currently working to provide adequate healthcare and overall assistance to whomever they can, the UN has still found that there are currently 3.2 million people suffering from acute malnutrition, including two million children younger than age five. This number additionally covers roughly 1.1 million pregnant and breastfeeding women, with large numbers of Yemeni women facing growing health and protection risks in the face of starvation.

Cholera and COVID-19

*"Disagreements between government and non-government forces were responsible for the destruction."*

cases are in a consistent upswing, with 344,000 suspected cholera cases in 2019 and over 2,000 COVID-19 sourced cases since April with a 25% fatality rate. Many Yemenis are unable to pay for treatment due to no longer having a consistent source of income, and there is a simple



The Al Saleh Mosque in Yemen. Photo courtesy of Kheldon.

lack of materials and hospitals to provide citizens with full healthcare. Some of the country's districts are listed as having no doctors whatsoever. The most recent addition to the CIA World Factbook regarding this number lists 0.53 physicians for every 1,000 Yemeni people, showing a gross lack of adequate healthcare professionals during a period when they are acutely needed. The UN has estimated that to counter the ongoing crisis, over four million dollars are needed to supply the Yemeni people with sufficient humanitarian aid, and although it is being raised, the money alone does not guarantee a resolution to the underlying issue of the ongoing civil war.

This is not to say there is no hope for Yemen. Extensive measures are currently being taken to assist the country and its people in returning to a healthy condition. With organizations such as UNICEF, OCHA, CARE, Project HOPE, and Mercy Corps giving assistance in person and raising money,

there is definite room for positive progress. An emphasis has been placed on getting food, clean water, sanitation services, and reproductive care to citizens, and there are currently several petitions available to sign and organizations to be donated to with a focus on reaching these goals.

It is important to reaffirm that in order to truly resolve these crises, regardless of external forces offering assistance, the root of the problem – Yemen's civil war – must be resolved. Prior UN orchestrated peace talks have yielded little result, though more recent conversations between Yemen's rebels and Saudi Arabia express both sides are in favor of peace, even amongst continued violence between the two sides. For Yemen's people to be safe and healthy, an emphasis needs to be placed not only on ending the ongoing war, but also ensuring that the country receives continuous support from humanitarian organizations.

## Good News

Elaine Lu '23  
Staff Writer

The Madeira School is re-opening campus for Module 2 and is glad to welcome students back to school.

A man and his 7-year-old daughter, along with their dog, were rescued after 48 hours in Mount Hood ravine.

The orca whale who famously carried her dead calf with her for weeks in 2018 has now given birth to a healthy calf, according to the Center for Whale Research, which monitors Pacific Northwest killer whale populations.

A boy from Indianapolis was cured of his innate sickle cell disease after receiving a stem cell transplant.

A toothless senior dog offers comfort to people who hate going to the dentist by being a dental therapy dog.

A woman who slept in a Kroger grocery store's parking lot for a year was hired by the grocery store and saved from giving up hopes of finding a job.

Though feared destroyed, most of the ancient trees at Big Basin Redwoods State Park withstood a massive wildfire that swept through California's oldest state park.

Special Olympian Colby Douglas returned home after 136 days in hospital with COVID-19.

A 90-year-old grandfather comes out as gay in a Facebook post. He is proud of his sexuality even though it took him a lifetime to say that.

# A Fight for High Ground

## *India and China Spar over Territory in the Himalayas*

Megan Schmitz '21  
Staff Writer

Though often imagined as concrete, constant truths, country borders only exist insofar as the states they confine legitimate them through mutual agreement or martial enforcement. Along the boundary line between China and India, or the Line of Actual Control (LAC), geographical variability and geopolitical rivalry have throughout the summer encouraged China and India to validate their territorial claims by force. As of September 12, 2020, the Chinese and Indian foreign ministers have vowed to de-escalate the violence by keeping soldiers on their nations' respective sides, but neither official's government has publicly accepted the other's understanding of where these sides begin and end. In avoiding defining the border, the Chinese and Indian governments have sidestepped assigning fault for the numerous altercations that have transpired since June, some of which have involved soldier fatalities and civilian kidnapping. While this choice allows both parties to project infallibility and strength to their citizenry, the root of the dispute remains unresolved, leaving open the possibility of



An Indian soldier patrols near the disputed border. Photo courtesy of The New York Times.

future aggressive escalation between two nuclear powers.

The violence of this summer began on June 16, when Chinese and Indian border guards clashed in the Galwan River Valley near Ladakh, India. Despite the battle having reportedly resulted in twenty Indian casualties, both sides assert that the soldiers fought with only their fists and thus did not violate a 1996 treaty to carry no firearms. Regardless of the weapons used, the fatality count, the first since 1974, distinguishes the incident from the skirmishes between patrolmen that occur regularly at the border. Both countries claim the other sparked the altercation by crossing the LAC: India's media reports that the People's Liberation Army has occupied around 620 miles

of Indian territory since April while Chinese Colonel Zhang Suili attests that Indian soldiers had passed over the border into the Chinese-controlled Shengpai Mountains twice that day.

In the absence of a mutual understanding of the June incident, tensions continued to escalate throughout July and August. After Indian soldiers partnered with pro-Indian Tibetan revolutionaries to secure hilltops in the area on August 31, five Indian youths went missing, disappearances for which China has accepted responsibility. Tensions heightened further when, on September 8, warning shots were fired by one or both sides, breaching the 1996 treaty. To avoid escalating the dispute into an active conflict, the two nations' officials held

the aforementioned meeting two days later, consenting to participate in further dialogue about their conflicting claims.

Since its conception in 1914 by the British Raj, geographic features along the LAC have rendered its location subject to natural fluctuations, thereby providing China and India with a point of contention over which to express more large-scale disagreements. Situated on top of bodies of water and snowcaps, shifts in temperature and rainfall can shift the landmarks that serve to distinguish Chinese land from Indian territory. The mountainous terrain on

*"The conflict therefore extends beyond the scope of territorial misunderstanding: to lose footing in the region would demonstrate weakness on the global stage."*

which the LAC resides further minimizes the economic value of the areas that surround it, making ownership of those areas exclusively useful in geopolitical posturing.

Because of the land's lack of tangible worth, India left their side of the boundary,

which consists of the province of Kashmir, undeveloped until 2019. However, China's recent partnership with Pakistan on infrastructure projects at the three nations' shared border shifted power over the region to China. Responding to this imbalance, India sent 12,000 laborers to the border to construct a road network between India's military bases in Kashmir. The conflict therefore extends beyond the scope of territorial misunderstanding: to lose footing in the region would demonstrate weakness on the global stage. Reflective of this broader view of the dispute's importance, Chinese state newspapers such as the Global Times have attributed the escalation to United States influence over India's government. So long as both governments remain economically friendly to the other's rival, the need to appear uncompromising in smaller disagreements such as the LAC dispute will remain.

Despite their September pledge to cool tensions, China and India have yet to officially adopt a shared interpretation on where their border exists, thereby preserving their irreconcilable stories on the source of the conflict. Tensions between the two countries linger, lying dormant until another event sets them into motion.

# Autocracy Rising

*How the Pandemic Consolidated Governmental Power in Eastern Europe*

Megan Schmitz '21  
Staff Writer

One primary role of governments is to maintain a level of societal order that individuals would struggle to achieve. In times of crisis, carrying out this role can entail an expansion of governmental power for the common good, even at the expense of personal liberties. During the coronavirus pandemic, democratic governments worldwide have had to balance the need for increased control and the desire to preserve citizens' rights. In nations such as Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria, the pandemic presented a justification for unprecedented seizures of power. While these countries' prime ministers and presidents maintain that their actions are proportionate to the needs of the moment, other European leaders question their necessity. Irrespective of their suitability, the actions these leaders have undertaken have granted them unprecedented influence over legislation, criminal trials, and electoral operations; in short, they have shifted nations further toward what the democracy research nonprofit Freedom House considers as autocracy.

**Hungary:** On March 30, Prime Minister Orbán of Hungary enacted the Act on the Containment of Coronavirus, granting his far-right Fidesz party the ability to bypass Parliament in implementing decrees. The law further criminalized

spreading information deemed misleading by the state. As the prime minister's party has in the past faced accusations of consolidating Hungarian news outlets under one pro-state monopoly, his opponents feared that the law could see abuse as a means of silencing political dissent. With his newly-gained unilateral power, Orbán fueled these worries by staying any local elections until the Hungarian Parliament, more than two-thirds of which is comprised of Fidesz party members, revoked the country's state of emergency declaration. Though Orbán's government repealed the law on June 16, it set a precedent for state-run censorship and unchecked control during crises; another law passed that same day codified the former law's actions as reactivatable during national emergencies.

**Poland:** From March through July, Polish President Andrzej Duda and his Law and Order Party (LIS) fostered con-

*"In nations such as Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria, the pandemic presented a justification for unprecedented seizures of power."*

ditions favorable to their political objectives. Initially, having an unsustainable lead in the polls, the LIS intended to hold a presidential election with entirely mail-in

ballots despite widespread concerns about the postal service's capacity. Though the LIS eventually postponed the election, instead of doing so through parliamentary action, the legislature compelled the Polish Supreme Court to rule the election void. In exercising this power, the Court set a precedent for overturning electoral outcomes that could enable future power-grabbing. Moreover, the ruling party has brought several controversial motions to the floor—including bills restricting abortion and sexual education—that have bred large-scale public protests in the past. Because President Duda outlawed large public gatherings in March, demonstrations occurred on a smaller scale, reducing their influence over public opinion. Intentionally or otherwise, the president's government has thus profited from the restrictions on Poles' personal freedoms imposed to contain coronavirus's spread.

**Bulgaria:** On March 23, the Bulgarian Parliament passed the Law on the Measures and Actions during the State of Emergency, which rendered any governmental actions constitutionally sound during crises. While the country's president, an opposition party member, vetoed measures within the bill that would have criminalized the dissemination of false information, the ruling party have enough parliamentary seats to overturn his veto should they desire. The act also still contained measures



Prime Minister Orbán of Hungary meets with authoritarian ally President Putin of Russia. *Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.*

that diminish the rights of citizens guaranteed by the Bulgarian Constitution. One such measure permits law enforcement to review the traffic data of individuals without judicial oversight. Another allows the army to employ force on civilians who fail to abide by safety mandates. Beyond the legislature, the nation's judiciary branch has also tightened its control, indefinitely suspending all court proceedings. Through virtual forms of protest, Bulgarians demanded and eventually regained their ability to file legal complaints against the government. In not accepting temporary controls they judged as excessive,

Bulgarian citizens momentarily maintained their role in shaping public policy decisions.

By making the decisions of individuals heavily impactful to the health of the whole, the pandemic has led to widespread expansions in governmental control in Eastern Europe. These controls, in temporarily reducing the people's freedoms and say in governance, prioritize health and welfare over democratic ideals. Only time will determine whether these measures exist only to quell the global health crisis or if three of Europe's states have abandoned democracy in favor of autocratic rule.

## Markey Defeats Kennedy in Mass. Senate Primary

*An anomaly in the pattern of incumbents and their young challengers*

Lilly Tanenbaum '21  
Staff Writer

Senator Edward Markey beat primary challenger Representative Joe Kennedy on Sep 1, shattering the perfect record of the Kennedy family in Massachusetts elections and holding onto his nearly fifty year political career. Markey served in the House of Representatives early in his career, from 1976 to 2013. He became a Senator in a special election in 2013, and then campaigned and won in 2014 to hold the seat for a normal six year term. Similar to Markey, Kennedy

was elected to the House of Representatives in 2012, and has been a helpful fundraising and campaigning force within the Democratic Party ever since. Kennedy was, in a way, born into a career in American politics. His father is U.S. Representative Joseph P. Kennedy, his grandfather is U.S. Senator and U.S. attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, and his great-uncles are President John F. Kennedy and U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy, who held the seat Markey currently holds. Kennedy was chosen to give the Democratic Party's official response to the State of the Union in 2018. Both

Kennedy and Markey have connections and a long-standing history within the Democratic party.

Kennedy, with his family name and countless ties to the Democratic Party, did not represent the progressive change that has come to be associated with young challengers. In contrast, Sen. Markey ran as the candidate of the working class despite having served as an elected official for 50 years. Rep. Kennedy and Sen. Markey agree on many broad policy issues, with Kennedy trending more moderately than well-known-progressive Markey. In his campaign, Kennedy slammed Markey on rarely spending time in Massachusetts, Markey apparently being one of the only Massachusetts lawmakers who does not return to a home in the state frequently. Kennedy's justification for challenging the incumbent member of his party was simply that he thought could do a better job than Markey.

Kennedy is far from the only candidate who has had to justify their decision to run against an experienced and popular incumbent in recent years. One of the most famous races in which a young, liberal candidate challenged an older and more powerful incumbent was the race that elected rising Democratic party star Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cor-

tez. Ocasio-Cortez received criticism from party leaders for challenging 10-term incumbent and Democratic Caucus Chair Joe Crowley. Ocasio-Cortez said during her first primary that "The only way you defeat an incumbent is by outworking them." Since

*"Kennedy, with his family name and countless connections to the Democratic Party, did not represent the progressive change that has come to be associated with young challengers."*

1964, voters have reelected their incumbent House Representative 93 percent of the time and their incumbent Senator 82 percent of the time. This fact tends to benefit both the Democratic and Republican Parties, as they can keep their more experienced Senators and Representatives in office, and incumbents have a better shot at beating their challengers from the other party. In April of 2019, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee rolled out a new policy that aimed to protect incumbent candidates by blacklisting any political vendors working with candidates challenging incumbents. The policy faced criticism from progressives, but was

defended by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. In her statement on the issue, Pelosi told her party, "My focus is strictly on winning the election and to putting our resources where it will win the election for the American people." The smartest candidate to back, she implies, is the incumbent.

Despite her previous statements on the dangers of challenging an incumbent, however, Pelosi endorsed Kennedy in his bid for Markey's Senate seat, putting herself on the list of the many Democratic Congressmen who endorsed either Markey or Kennedy during the primary. Pelosi stated that "Massachusetts and America need Joe Kennedy's courage and leadership in the Senate to fight for the change we need." Markey, on the other hand, received endorsements from prominent progressive representatives including Ocasio-Cortez, whose endorsement was key to his victory and crucial in attracting young voters.

Kennedy's planned road to victory, and the usual road to victory for a candidate challenging an incumbent, counted on support from young voters. However, it was Markey's progressive policies that attracted the majority of support from younger demographics, and it was Markey who won the race.



Rep. Joe Kennedy elbow bumps Sen. Edward Markey after their debate at the Western Mass News station on June 1, 2020, Springfield, Mass. *Photo courtesy of Matthew J. Lee of The Boston Globe.*

# Drawing the Good from the Bad

## Madeira Quarantine Stories

Abby Major '23  
Staff Writer

Do not touch your face. Wash your hands frequently. Always stay six feet apart. Wear a mask. For almost 7 months, the world has been repeating these words. Sometimes it feels like COVID-19 and the resulting quarantine have stopped the world from spinning. But even though going to the store feels like the apocalypse and it seems like the pandemic will never end, many people have found a light at the end of the tunnel. Quarantine has left time for many to self-reflect, create something new, or just get some well-deserved rest. Whether it has been baking delicious (or downright awful) bread, learning a new language, writing a book, or even just finding a new show to binge-watch, almost everyone has done something engaging to pass the time during quarantine. So, let us ask the question: What have Madeira students done to find a little light in these hard times?

**Elaine Lu '23:** "I took my time in quarantine to read and write a lot more than when I was with my friends. I took

this time, when I was alone, and could ponder more deeply, to write some poems and read some good books. I mean I'm not Taylor Swift, who is a genius and wrote a whole album in her quarantine, but I did write some works that I'm really proud of."

**Eliza Reed '23:** "I've lived in New York City for my entire life, but during quarantine I've been living in Virginia and I have had the chance to experience living in a rural area for the first time. My dad has been teaching me how to drive on the small country roads around here, and my family even had chickens for a while, which was an experience to say the least. Also, this summer we got a kitten named Chester Cheese, who is incredibly sweet and cute!"

**Katherine Feeney '24:** "Quarantine has given me time to learn more about myself and seek new hobbies. One of the advantages of being isolated has been observing and learning about the environment around me and seeing how many have it worse. During quarantine I have had many resources that others may not have. These resources have made it easier for me to adventure



Madeira students did a lot of baking during quarantine, including banana bread! Photo courtesy of the BBC.

into new interests and keep myself entertained while still social distancing and staying healthy."

**Stella Davis '21:** "During quarantine, I became obsessed with making lots of mug cake as well as banana bread. To work off all the mug cake, I went

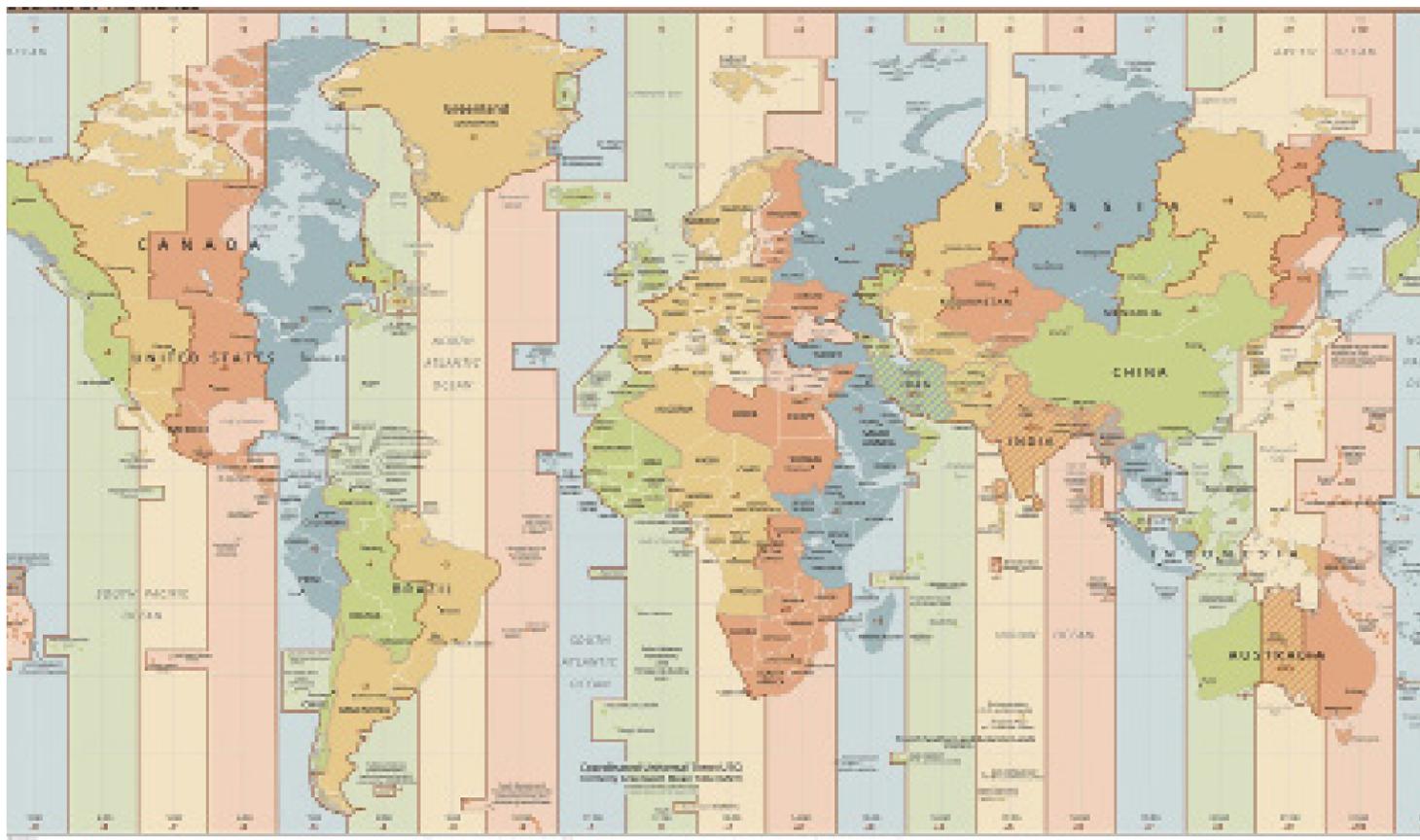
on a lot of bike rides along the parkway to D.C. or to Mount Vernon. Before quarantine, I hadn't done any baking or bike riding in forever, so it was nice to get back into things that I enjoy."

**Grace Thomas '21:** "I finally did something I've want-

ed to do for years - cut my hair myself! Seeing that I never left the house it was the perfect opportunity and I took advantage of it. Using a Brad Mondo tutorial as a guide (which was honestly not that helpful) and some luck my hair turned out pretty good."

# School with a 12-Hour Time Difference

## School Schedule Changes for International Students



Time Zone Difference Map. Image Courtesy of Hello World Digital.

Helen Zhao '22  
Staff Writer

As the 2020-2021 school year unfolds, students are gradually adapting to a new style of learning while teachers and staff members are getting more used to assisting students, leading them into a smooth transition from in-person to virtual learning. Obviously, this online-based studying experience probably was not the type of "school" we all expected, but it has opened us up to many new opportunities. With

Madeira's diverse community, there are many students living in different time zones who need to adapt to new daily schedules and study skills, along with managing and balancing life in and outside of school. Living in a time zone that is 12 hours ahead of Madeira, I would be among those students.

In the beginning of the first module, I tried attending my regular C block class, which happened at two in the morning. Even though that time of night may not seem too late to stay up on the weekends, it was totally dif-

ferent when staying up for school. Trying to keep up with notes for key terms as well as lectures, my head felt drowsy and my body felt like a machine without batteries,

*"Although having such a long day of school and work is tiresome, the feeling of fulfillment is rewarding."*

just an empty shell. Attending my regular C block class did not work out well because I trusted in my brain's ability to stay clear-head-

ed too much and instead was losing focus. Even if one could stay concentrated without the mind's malfunctions, it still probably would not be the most effective choice to stay up that late for class. While it is best to attend regular full period classes, a healthy sleep schedule is also crucial because it allows students to be better able to concentrate and be productive during the daytime.

The short conference period before advisory time is used for students in different time zones who cannot attend regular

classes to conference with their teachers. As each conference is merely 20 minutes and its structure is mainly Q&A based, it is hard to cover everything that is being taught in the regular class thoroughly. Without the full assistance of teachers, the learning experience is more independent for students. The shorter class periods encourage students to solve problems on their own and prepare better for each class so that they can put their ideas into words faster without wasting time. Every moment is essential. Racing against time, the fast-paced class develops a concentrated and content-rich class that allows students to develop new styles of learning with efficiency, speed, and accuracy, pushing us to make progress and move forward rapidly.

The totally reversed time zones made school happen at night and work happen during the day. As we are sleeping later each night, waking up early is a little more difficult sometimes and mornings are always rather exhausting. Although having such a long day of school and work is tiresome, the feeling of fulfillment is rewarding.

Even with such a different schedule that is detached from that of our fellow Madeira students, events in school always help us feel more involved and connected to the community. Those in time zones that differ greatly from Madeira's time must make many adjustments in order to attend classes, but despite the challenges, students still have many opportunities to connect with teachers and classmates, making their learning experience meaningful.

# A New Face in A New Year

## *An interview with Athletics Director Tavis Laws*

Abby Major '23  
Staff Writer

From basketball to rock climbing, Madeira considers athletics to be a vital part of the experience it provides for its students. It is important to not only the players, but also to the students and faculty who attend games in support of the Snails. With 12 different sports teams that practice and play throughout 3 seasons, it is important that everything stays on track and that players get the most out of the experience as they can. This is where the role of Director of Athletics comes into play. Tavis Laws, Madeira's new Director of Athletics, is the newest addition to the Madeira Athletics Staff. Mr. Laws is a graduate of Sheppard University and he has experience coaching students of all ages, from kindergarten to high school. He has worked at The Congressional School, Powhatan School, and runs a basketball camp. As many players can attest, his work in keeping the sports community fun and interactive during these trying times has been beneficial for all the players. In this interview, we learn about his heroes, his hopes for the future, and how he plans to start his Madeira journey during these

crazy times.

Abby Major: What drew you to Madeira and what are your favorite aspects of it so far?

Tavis Laws: I think what drew me to Madeira was once I came through my interview process and having that interaction with some of the Madeira students and seeing how impressive they were. And obviously the 376 acres of beauty really drew me here. The things that I am enjoying right now are the food, my staff, my team, the facilities, and just the community in and of itself with the interactions I've had with all the girls.

AM: How have you been continuing sports in the Madeira community this season?

TL: We are doing everything from conditioning training to swimming (we're giving our girls swimming workouts), to leadership. We are doing everything that we would be doing in person in the virtual space. Our girls aren't missing a beat at all. They are just doing it in a virtual world.

AM: When and why did you become interested in sports?

TL: I became interested in sports when I was about four years old. I just enjoyed being around people working for a



Tavis Laws, the new Athletic Director for Madeira. Photo courtesy of The Madeira School.

common goal. I like the exercise, I like the relationships you get through sports, and I love the challenge that comes with sports. Now, I like giving my insights that I've learned through sports to my students.

AM: Do you have any advice for athletes and non-athletes about life or tips on exercise in quarantine?

TL: I think that you just have to have a growth mindset. As we are all quarantined and our

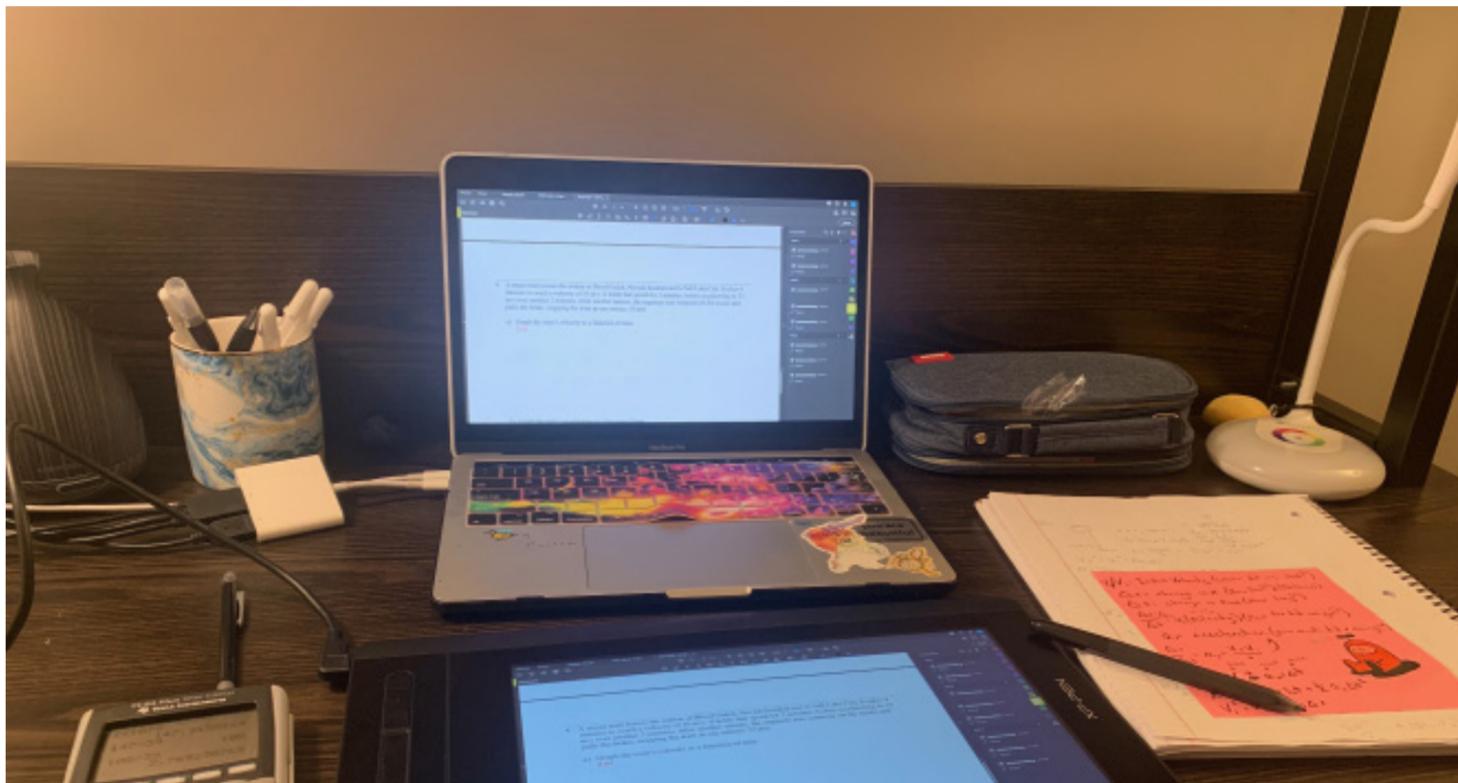
normal isn't normal anymore, I think that you have to look for the positive in everything and look for ways to keep yourself upbeat and find different avenues to exercise and connect with people. And not only people, but with things that you enjoy. I think that at this time it's very key to connect. Whether it's a pet, or walks, being in nature, or friends, whatever you can do to keep it upbeat. And smile! Find things to laugh at, that's essential to your well-being

ing right now.

Madeira's athletic program is a staple in our community, and Mr. Laws will create an even better program for the many students who are involved, both directly and indirectly, with Madeira athletics. With his confidence and talent, he will fit right in. Madeira is in good hands with Mr. Laws and it is exciting to see what he will do to make the athletics program the best that it can be.

## Unity Even In Distance

### *Students' Experiences with Virtual Sports at Madeira*



Students maintain their class setup when transferring to athletics. Photo courtesy of Jess Newberg '22.

Kate Chamberlin '22  
Assistant Editor

Among the many changes the world has encountered these past few months is the attempt to manage a virtual education. Teachers and students alike have struggled with bridging this gap of learning, with both parties making significant efforts to adjust their routines successfully. However, this change to attending school from a distance has not only affected the actual learning process but has forced athletics

departments everywhere to significantly alter their programs in order to keep students safe. The struggle brought by this is experienced not only by instructors but by students as well.

At Madeira, students across a variety of different sports and grades are attempting to manage these changes. Currently, the athletics program is managing the distance through group Teams calls in which students participate in Breakaway (the fitness company that has led workouts for Madeira athletes over the past few years) and general work-

outs – keeping students active but eliminating the ability for teams to connect and practice their own sport. Varying students of course have their own thoughts on how they feel about it all, but they do share common perspectives on the process as a whole and how they feel about their inability to participate successfully. Out of the five students who were interviewed, four juniors and one senior, all agreed that having a set schedule and plan is a significant improvement from last spring, when Madeira had initially transitioned into distance learning.

Due to the sudden departure from campus, the 2020 spring athletics program was full of uncertainty, and athletes are grateful for the adjustments that have been made in the form of general workouts and Breakaway activities. However, each wished that there was a way for them to participate in activities specific to their sport. While it has been acknowledged that the athletics department is absolutely “doing the best they can,” (Jessica Newberg '22) students who feel positively about the progress that they have made feel that a significant portion of

that improvement can be sourced to external effort when they have the time, rather than just the work done during D block.

Despite the difficulties, the juniors all still plan to return to their sports next year - Caroline Kaczmarczyk, class of 2022, who is on the varsity volleyball team, emphasized that “even though we're virtual now, I haven't stopped wanting to play with my team.” In fact, the value each player places on their team seems to be a unifying point for the juniors, all of whom are participating in team sports - Jessica Newberg cites her friends as a high point for volleyball, Amanda Oliver shares her gratitude that the volleyball season has been moved, potentially giving her the chance to actually spend time with her team, and Caroline Chaze lists her greatest challenge as being unable to actually play with her team this season for soccer.

Overall, the consensus is perhaps an obvious one, as all carry a distaste for virtual athletics because it disables connection with teammates, but agree that it has been handled as well as possible. However, what was striking was the understanding and kindness that students showed for the athletics department and the value that they placed on their teams and the concept of return. Though all are frustrated, they reassure themselves by focusing on how everyone is trying their best to manage the difficulties of virtual life, creating an excellent model for even those of us not currently in sports: to have patience, and to hope.

# Movie Review: Capernaum

## A Drama Highlighting Human Resilience

Helen Zhao '22  
Staff Writer

Through three years of social investigation and another five years of work, Nadine Labaki tells a touching story in the film "Capernaum," expressing true humanity through struggles for survival. The story starts off with Zain, the protagonist, in court accusing his parents with the reason: "they gave birth to me," breaking many viewers' hearts. Zain is a 12-year-old refugee living in the small town of Capernaum. Being the oldest child of irresponsible parents, the burden of taking care of his siblings is forced onto him. Due to poverty, his parents decide to marry his younger sister to a richer neighbor. News later spreads that Zain's sister had died due to young age pregnancy. Zain, who cannot internalize his anger any longer, murders his sister's husband. Although it begins tragically, the movie ends happily with Zain receiving an official passport, leaving hope for audiences.

Audiences' hearts ache upon seeing Zain's agonizing experience with his chaotic and unorganized family. One of Zain's brothers stands with his feet chained to the wall to keep him from moving. The brutality of Zain's parents portrays their selfishness and loss of humanity. When Zain wanders and sees a

statue of a woman, he slowly hugs it. Even a cold statue is more dependable to Zain than his mother, granting him the long-lost maternal love he has always longed for. The desperation in Zain's eyes makes viewers realize that cruelty not only comes from physical abuse, but also from a lack of affection. The scar of lacking love was never healed until he accused his parents for giving birth to him; his parents answered that they had grown up with the same hardships. But why lay the same burden on someone else again? It was all too late for any realizations as Zain's hope in family was already long lost.

Desperation created by poverty can deprive people of their kindness. Zain has a smaller body than others who are his age, but poor conditions have forced him to mature, depriving him of his innocence. Seeing the harsh conditions of Zain's family, audiences feel empathetic about their position in life where poverty has

*"The film consists of 2 hours, but Zain only smiles for 17 seconds of it."*

taken away their choices, because they are not living, they are surviving. The film describes many hardships that viewers can never truly understand, but Zain's resilience in not giving in to his fate urges audiences to bravely com-



Zain taking care of young Yonas. Photo courtesy of Mooz Films.

bat struggles. Unlike his parents, Zain kept his selflessness and remained pure of heart. When Zain leaves home and meets a poor infant named Yonas, whose mother was gone, Zain shares food with him even though he himself is starving. It is heart-warming to see that even a young child can have such a generous heart. Zain's care for Yonas proves that

connections are not only identified by blood, but also by unforgettable experiences of devotion.

The film consists of 2 hours, but Zain only smiles for 17 seconds of it. Even though Zain received the help he deserved in the end, there are still many others who are left in need of assistance. The movie's most touching part, perhaps, would be that it is

based on the life story of Zain, the actor, and his experience as a refugee. The movie perfectly forms feelings of connection between the viewers and the characters. By illustrating a hopeful future for Zain, the movie empowers viewers to seek glorious futures that await and reminds us to always look at the wellbeing of the world optimistically, as Zain does.

# A Disney Movie Review: Mulan

## A Successful Remake or A Total Failure?



Liu Yifei, who plays Mulan in the 2020 remake. Photo courtesy of Photo5.

Lillian Xie '22  
Staff Writer

Mulan is a 2020 action drama movie directed by Niki Caro and produced by Walt Disney Pictures. This film is a live-action adaptation of Disney's animated classic from 1998. The story is based on a Chinese folktale, "The Ballad of Mulan," which tells the story of a girl's being conscripted to save her elderly father. Audiences have high expecta-

tions for the film, but it stirs up great controversy. Some believe the adaptation allows viewers to look at the story from a novel angle; however, others criticize the drastic changes that depart from the original, such as removing Li Shang and the musical element of the film. Although the plan for this movie was made in 2010, this project was postponed and was finally invested in in 2017. The release of this movie was supposed to be in March, but due to COVID-19, Disney delayed the-

atrical release and premiered the movie on September 4, 2020 on Disney Plus for a fee. For countries where movie theaters have been reopened, the release is a traditional theatrical one.

As the animated version created a great sensation when it was first released, many people have been looking forward to this movie. It was a significant moment in Western popular culture's representation of Chinese culture. The reviews of Mulan in North America have been gener-

ally positive ones, with an 81 percent freshness rating on Rotten Tomatoes. Audiences praised the movie for its cast, dazzling battle scenes, action, and vibrant use of color. American parents believe that with the help of movie, children may be inspired to dig deeper into Asian cultures and learn more about the variety of traditions in the world.

However, the 2020 action film does not satisfy the appetite of its Chinese audience. With a disappointing performance at box offices in China, the live-action adaptation of Mulan proved far less impressive to Chinese audiences than it did to North American ones. Audiences criticize the adaptation for removing the essence of the original story. People believe that the original poem was meant to illustrate the bravery of women and to stress a message of gender equality. In this adaptation, many viewers feel that Mulan shows too much masculinity, and does not emphasize enough the strength in her femininity. Furthermore, instead of a multisided character, Mulan is presented as too perfect in this adaptation, as she has no defects or fears.

For an adaptation made by a Western country, Disney did a relatively decent job on showing the essence of Eastern culture. The cast is made up of Asian faces and the setting and scenery throw the audience back to ancient China. Specifically, the

uses of the colors red, yellow, and black greatly endow the movie with Chinese feeling. However, critics point out that some slang and traditional Chinese phrases were not translated enough for the audience to fully understand their meaning. For instance, a line in the movie - "four ounces can move 1000 pounds" - sounds confusing. Audiences may feel perplexed and wonder why four ounces are able to move 1000

*"Audiences criticize the adaptation for removing the essence of the original story."*

pounds. In fact, this idiom means that a relatively weak figure tries to fight with a big man, reflecting their bravery.

This movie fails to be faithful to the original poem, and thus many claim that this version is lacking in comparison to the animated one. The core message of Mulan and the original poem is to inspire women and advocate for children's deep love for their parents. In the action film, instead of focusing on how Mulan replaces her dad, the emphasis is on how powerful and unbeatable Mulan is. Her growth and the challenges she overcomes are ignored as if she had been born perfect. More effort could have been put into the story itself, rather than a pure vision feast without any deep meaning.